



State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913
PH (517) 373.7946 | FAX (517) 373.2678
www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/stamas/

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Contact: Jennifer Bowman
(517) 373-7946

Sen. Stamas sponsors legislation to help protect residential care residents

LANSING – Members of the Michigan State Senate have requested legislation to protect senior citizens and vulnerable individuals in residential care facilities, announced state Sen. Tony Stamas, R-Midland.

“The individuals receiving care in residential care facilities are some of our most vulnerable residents and we must do everything in our power to help protect them,” Stamas said. “I am proud to sponsor legislation to help make senior citizens safer.”

The three-bill package expands the Adult Foster Care Facility Licensing Act and the Public Health Code, requiring residential care facilities across the state to conduct criminal background checks of all potential employees, as well as all employees on an annual basis.

In addition to requiring annual background checks, the proposed legislation will also require background checks at the time of hire.

Another portion of the package will enhance the criminal sanctions against facilities that fail to comply with the background check requirements.

Attorney General Mike Cox recently released the results of a study revealing that almost 10 percent of residential care employees have criminal backgrounds.

The study also revealed that since 2002, 25 percent of the residential care facility employees who committed crimes against residents had past criminal convictions.

Approximately 100,000 Michigan residents receive care in one of about 5,000 residential care facilities across the state.

“Senior citizens living in nursing homes have a right to feel safe,” Stamas said. “By passing these important pieces of legislation we can help ensure that senior citizens will be safer in the facilities they call home.”

The proposed legislation will be introduced in the coming weeks.

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Editors Note: A photo of Sen. Stamas is available on the Senate Majority Photowire at:
<http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/photowire/Stamas/Stamas.htm>